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HEADLINE: 3 New Metro Stops Get Rainy But Lively Celebration;
First Rail Link To Uptown Area;
Metro Sites Receive Lively Sendoff in Rain

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BODY:

Metro inaugurated three new subway stations in Northwest Washington yesterday, and although the weather was less than ideal, the three-ring celebration for the stations went off pretty much as planned.

Marching bands played, politicians spoke and wide-eyed spectators applauded -- though all spent a good deal of the morning shivering.

The three new stations, all along Connecticut Avenue, are an extension of the subway's Red Line and the first to open in the city west of Rock Creek Park.

The day's festivities began in freezing rain at Connecticut and Woodley Road, site of the new Woodley Park-Zoo station, the first station north of the subway's old terminus at Dupont Circle. Local merchants, who are banking on the subway to make their businesses more accessible to downtown workers in the habit of spending money, had hoped for more than the approximately 200 persons who defied the elements to attend the 10 a.m. ceremony.

"The weather has not stopped us," Mayor Marion Barry exhorted the crowd, "because we are strong people, committed people, dedicated people, caring people." An aide held an umbrella over the mayor's head.

As the rain increased, others made light of the situation. "I don't have an umbrella because, on a City Council salary, I can't afford one," said council member David A. Clarke. "I did have the money budgeted for one, but then Metro raised its fares."

The Sheraton-Washington Hotel, adjacent to the new Woodley Park-Zoo station, staged its own fete for the occasion, passing out cider and coffee. The hotel also hired an actor who resembled Harry S Truman. His assignment was to proclaim to all, "The train not the buck stops here." The pseudo-Truman got wet. Except the people inside the panda, lion and gorilla costumes -- representing the nearby National Zoo -- everybody got wet.

A group of Woodley Park residents showed up to protest a shortage of parking at the Sheraton that, they said, forces hotel patrons to park on surrounding residential streets. Some said they do not accept the argument that the subway will ease the problem. "People are not going to come to a Saturday night formal function and leave with the last train at midnight," said Bill Carroll, who

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lives several blocks away. "That's simple bull."

After the officials cut the ceremonial ribbon across the entrance to the station, they descended what Metro calls the "Free World's longest escalator" (204 feet, but shorter than one in the Soviet Union) to board the subway for a free ride to the next stop, Cleveland Park.

Standing on the underground platform waiting to board the train, Cleveland Park resident Sally Flanagan said she planned to use the subway to get to work. It is wonderful, she said, but noted that she worries that because of the subway the stable Cleveland Park neighborhood might experience a burst of development. "It might be changed from residential to something else," she said.

At Cleveland Park, Regis Blahut, proprietor of Ambassador Wine and Liquors, stood in the rain -- now slackened to a drizzle -- and poured free champagne for the crowd. He said he hoped the subway would bring more pedestrian traffic to the neighborhood's business district. "We need people," he said.

The marching band from Meade Senior High School in Fort Meade, Md., entertained, as did the chorus from the city's John Eaton Elementary School and a number of other groups. There was a covered grandstand for dignitaries but, as the weather continued to improve, they hardly needed it.

At this stop, city budget director Gladys W. Mack substituted for Barry, plugging transportation initiatives taken by his administration. Once again the dignitaries cut the ceremonial ribbon, and then it was back underground for a ride to the new terminus of the Red Line, the Van Ness-UDC station.

There, riders emerged to a performance by the University of the District of Columbia marching band, the Striders. By now the sun was shining and the number of dignitaries had increased. Barry was back, joining City Council Chairman Arrington L. Dixon, council members Jerry A. Moore Jr., Betty Ann Kane, Hilda Mason and Polly Shackleton, as well as UDC President Lisle Carter.

Speakers praised the stop as a vital link between the UDC campus and the rest of the city. Two senior citizens, Sally Sussman and Helen Cronkite (mother of television newsman Walter Cronkite), cut the ribbon this time, and the crowd dispersed, many taking advantage of Metro's offer of a one-time-only free ride to any stop on the system.

GRAPHIC: Picture 1, A 204-foot escalator is the hallmark of the Woodley Park-Zoo station, right; Picture 2, City Council members Jerry Moore and David Clarke assist Mayor Marion Barry in cutting ribbon at Woodley Park; Picture 3, Van Ness-UDC now becomes the Red Line terminus. Photos by Ray Lustig -- The Washington Post

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